

Connections

A Virginia Local Emergency Planning Committee Newsletter

LEPC

Winter 2000

Risk Management Plans: How can the LEPC help?



(Photos by Arthur Miller)

By Chief Robert Symons, Chairperson
Harrisonburg/Rockingham County LEPC

On Aug. 5, 1999, President Clinton signed the Chemical Safety Information, Site Security and Fuels Regulatory Relief Act (PL 106-40) into law.

On Jan. 8, 2000, the Harrisonburg/Rockingham County Local Emergency Planning Committee (HRLEPC) took compliance to a new level with an open house that promoted corporate networking as well as public awareness.

It all began at a regularly scheduled meeting last October in which HRLEPC members discussed how they were going to comply with PL 106-40. The new law primarily concerns the public availability of the Off-site Consequence Analysis (OCA) sections of Risk Management Plans (RMPs) submitted by facilities under regulations implementing Section 112(r) of the Clean Air Act (CAA).

While it prohibits government officials from disclosing to the public the OCA sections of RMPs and other related materials until at least Aug. 5, 2000, the new law does not prohibit facilities from sharing with the public the OCA sections of their RMPs. It also requires facilities that have to submit an RMP for a Program 2 or 3 process to announce and hold a

public meeting by Feb. 1, 2000, to discuss their RMP, including the OCA sections.

With 10 facilities that fall under Program 2 and 3 processes, it seemed like a major undertaking for every industry in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County to conduct individual public meetings. Then, the committee decided to sponsor a joint open house, which would provide an outstanding opportunity for the businesses/industries to work together and for the public to learn about all the facilities at one time.

The HRLEPC held planning meetings last November to begin preparing for the open house. Their initial decisions included choosing a date and a location



with adequate space for displays and refreshments. During that meeting the group divided responsibilities among the participating facilities. Each facility received a duty assignment such as preparing press releases, developing handouts, making arrangements for refreshments, and sending invitations to city and county officials.

Several committee meetings later, all the arrangements were complete with the public meeting scheduled for 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Jan. 8, at the Rockingham County Administration Center. The HRLEPC chairperson served as the public information officer to ensure the public received adequate and concise

information.

The committee also scheduled a media opportunity prior to the event to ensure reporters had adequate access to take photographs and write their stories.

The day of the open house, the Harrisonburg/Rockingham Chamber of Commerce served as greeters and provided plastic bags for the citizens to use for their handouts and other information. All 10 participating facilities designed and set up a display area to provide a summary of their Off-site Consequence Analysis.

They also provided the public with information on plant design, maintenance, operations, and facts about the chemical they were reporting such as applications, hazards and chemical properties. Each facility was prepared to discuss their emergency response to a chemical accident on their property.

The HRLEPC also set up a booth to provide an overview of the Risk Management Planning Regulations, emergency response procedures and the equipment available for chemical releases within the city of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County.

The citizens who attended were impressed with the safety records of the facilities involved and appreciated the chance to discuss their concerns with representatives from each facility.

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LEPC forum generates good exchange

By George Roarty, Manager
Chemical Emergency Preparedness Branch

An LEPC Forum was conducted on January 19, 2000, at the VDES Trade Court facility. To assess the current state of LEPCs and the Chemical Emergency Preparedness Program participants from approximately 18 LEPCs, the Virginia Departments of Emergency Services and Environmental Quality, and the Environmental Protection Agency-Region 3 spent the day identifying issues of concern and discussing strategies that may be employed to enhance the program.

The LEPCs in attendance recommended that a state program be developed to provide guidance on establishing these committees and explain their role, responsibilities, and how they interface with and support other components of emergency management. The program would assist LEPCs with reorganization, serve as a tool in orienting new members, and serve as an outreach product to community organizations. Coupled with this recommendation, the LEPCs want to see a more robust Virginia Emergency Response Council that meets on a regular basis and provides more support and direction to LEPCs.

A number of strategies were discussed for strengthening the LEPC organization and enhancing its visibility within the community as well as throughout the state. One proposal recommends that LEPCs broaden their focus from hazardous materials to all hazards. This approach ensures a more efficient and effective use of department personnel engaged in supporting emergency management initiatives and allows for a more comprehensive perspective of emergency management issues at the local level. Each locality must decide whether to change to an all-hazard focus. Chesterfield County LEPC is a good example of an all-hazards organization.

Broadening the scope of LEPCs from primarily local to regional through the establishment of Regional LEPC Councils will fill an existing void in the emergency management organizational framework. The Regional LEPC Councils will facilitate the delivery of technical assistance, enhance mutual aid capabilities, and support the regional HAZMAT response organization in place. They will strengthen the overall level of regional preparedness by identifying regional needs and shortfalls, developing strategies to address identified needs, and establishing regional priorities.

LEPCs should consider including a Management Information Systems (MIS) representative on the committee to support database development and maintenance. There will be more emphasis on the development, use, and maintenance of databases/GIS in support of a variety of emergency management activities in the future. As their use increases and the demand for services grows, it is recommended that user groups be established to support the resolution of MIS issues that may surface locally as well as regionally. The Virginia Department of Emergency Services is currently working with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to develop additional data layers to support emergency management needs.

Strategies to improve the recognition of LEPCs locally as well as throughout the state include the development of an LEPC logo,

an LEPC Association (possibly a subgroup of Virginia Emergency Management Association or the HAZMAT Association), and improved outreach efforts. A video could also be developed as a tool to assist outreach efforts by explaining the roles and responsibilities of LEPCs, Virginia Emergency Response Council, HAZMAT Teams, HAZMAT Officers, etc.

The Chemical Emergency Preparedness Program is currently looking into the feasibility of developing this video to be distributed to all LEPCs.

Transportation of hazardous materials is another issue that needs more study and emphasis in the HAZMAT program. Although commodity flow studies are conducted periodically by LEPCs through the U.S. Department of Transportation Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness grant program, there may be a need to conduct a more comprehensive statewide study similar to the one conducted in the early 1980s when the HAZMAT program was being established. LEPC funding will need to be addressed as well. Representatives from Loudoun County indicated that their LEPC is supported with fees generated by facility inspections. The Chemical Emergency Preparedness Program will be looking into creative financing strategies and sharing them with LEPCs.

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is in the process of developing a Public Information Environmental Initiative. DEQ is looking at ways to enhance the availability of environmental data to the community to include SARA Title III information, through the use of the Internet. They are setting up a committee to study the environmental informational needs of stakeholders, as well as establish the parameters within which the information will be given out.

The LEPC Forum provided a healthy exchange of issues, ideas, and recommendations. We plan to address the issues raised in a timely fashion as well as engage additional LEPCs in the process by conducting more Forums throughout the state. A number of LEPC representatives in attendance expressed an interest in hosting a Forum in their region, and we will be following up with them in the near future. ♦

LEPC Survey Being Conducted

LEP Cs should have received an LEPC Survey being conducted by Anneliese Altenbach, a graduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University. Your participation is important, and all LEPCs are encouraged to take a few minutes to complete the survey and return it to Ms. Altenbach as soon as possible. The results of the survey will be shared with the Virginia Department of Emergency Services and LEPCs once they have been tabulated. ♦

Exercise held at Nottoway Correctional Center



By Steve De Lisi
Hazardous Materials Officer

On Oct. 16, 1999, the Nottoway Correctional Center (NCC) hosted a disaster exercise which tested its Emergency Operations Plan and enabled local and state responders to interact with and support emergency operations at the Burkeville, Va., facility.

The Virginia Department of Emergency Services (VDES) and the Old Dominion Emergency Medical Services Alliance (ODEMSA) jointly managed design coordination for the exercise, which included more than 50 participants from 10 different agencies. The scenario involved the simulated release and subsequent fire of flammable chemicals used at the NCC and called for several staff members to be "contaminated" with the products, resulting in numerous injuries.

Participating agencies included local fire, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and law enforcement, as well as Nottoway County and the Virginia Department of Corrections (DOC). Following the development of the scenario, representatives from each of these agencies developed specific performance objectives for their personnel when responding to this type of incident.

Once specific performance objectives were agreed upon, we established a training schedule for the months preceding the exercise to ensure emergency responders and NCC staff would be able to meet these objectives.

The final steps of the exercise design process included preparation of a safety plan, site map of the exercise area and an exercise schedule. One of the most important elements of the schedule was its use of a "repeat scenario" format that allowed the exercise to be conducted twice on the same day.

Using this format, the first scenario took place on the morning of Oct. 16. The lunch break that followed included a brief review of activities from the initial session along with suggestions for improvements. Participants also had an opportunity to change roles and apply lessons learned on the very same day as they replayed the scenario that afternoon.

On Nov. 10, 1999, an exercise review session at the Nottoway Rescue Squad yielded many valuable lessons learned. The most important was that all emergency services providers dedicated to helping victims of a disaster must avoid becoming victims themselves. Some additional suggestions for improvements were to:

- Create an on-site index to speed retrieval of Material Safety Data Sheets
- Provide equipment, such as barrier tape and windsocks, to better define and control access to hazardous areas
- Encourage additional joint training between local fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies

Questions regarding this exercise should be directed to Steven De Lisi, VDES Hazardous Materials Officer, at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6572, or Joe Donnelly, Executive Director for ODEMSA, at (804) 285-9111. ♦

U.S. DOT HMEP Grant Program – A Good Source of Funding to Support Your LEPC Planning Needs

The U.S. Department of Transportation Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant Program is designed to enhance the implementation of the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act of 1986 (EPCRA) by supporting state and local emergency planning and training initiatives that improve the level of hazardous materials preparedness, particularly as it relates to transportation.

Seventy-five percent of the planning funds received under this program are passed to LEPCs to support a number of their initiatives. These initiatives may include projects associated with the development, improvement, implementation, and exercising of emergency plans required under EPCRA. A hazard analysis—a study to determine flow patterns of hazardous materials within a state or local community—and an assessment of response capabilities are examples of eligible projects that can be conducted using these funds.

Approximately 50 percent of the available pass-through funds for FY 2000 have been awarded to LEPCs, with the balance of the available funds expected to be awarded within the next few weeks. All LEPCs who have requested applications should submit their applications no later than March 31, 2000.

The Virginia Department of Emergency Services will be submitting a state application for FY 2001 HMEP funds in June and will begin soliciting letters of intent for subgrant projects from LEPCs in May. HMEP planning funds increased approximately 35 percent in FY 2000 and may increase again in FY 2001.

LEPCs are encouraged to begin identifying potential projects to address any planning needs within their emergency planning districts. ♦

Terrorism Funds to Support Regional Exercises



The Virginia Department of Emergency Services has received funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to enhance terrorism consequence management preparedness throughout the Commonwealth.

A portion of these funds will be distributed to the 13 state Hazardous Materials Response Teams for the purposes of supporting additional training

and conducting a regional exercise in their respective response service areas. Each team will be awarded a subgrant in the amount of \$7,000 that must be expended or obligated by June 30, 2000.

The funds will be awarded and distributed in accordance with established funding distribution procedures associated with HAZMAT Team contracts. Letters of agreement have been sent out to the teams.

In preparation for the exercises, VDES has offered to conduct a two-day workshop to familiarize participants with the plan, exercise objectives, and their roles and responsibilities. The goals of the regional exercises will be to identify and address any shortfalls associated with state and local plans, the organizational response structure, local and regional response protocols, as well as resources.

The exercises will be designed to test and evaluate the terrorism consequence management planning and training initiatives that have been accomplished to date. These initiatives include the development and distribution of the state

Terrorism Consequence Management Plan and a sample local annex as well as the development and delivery of an awareness course, *Public Safety Response to Terrorism*, and a management course, *Public Safety Response to Terrorism-Management Considerations*.

These initiatives represent critical components of a comprehensive and integrated Terrorism Consequence Management program that is still evolving as resource capabilities are enhanced and roles and responsibilities are better defined. The lessons learned from these exercises will be considered in the update of the state Terrorism Consequence Management Plan, development of future training initiatives, enhancement of regional response procedures and protocols, and in the identification and prioritization of resource needs.

For further information contact Brett Burdick at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6569; email bburdick.des@state.va.us or George Roarty at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6574; email groarty.des@state.va.us. ♦

LEPC Connections on Website

You can review previous editions of the *LEPC Connections* on the VDES website located at www.vdes.state.va.us. They are found under Chemical Emergency Preparedness. You can get there by clicking on Emergency Management and then clicking on Technological Hazards. You can then access *LEPC Connections* by clicking on Chemical Emergency Preparedness and scrolling down. ♦

Risk (continued from page 1)

This was the first time a joint forum of this magnitude has been held in the city of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. Though the main objective of the public open house was to meet the RMP regulations and inform the public of the chemicals within their community, this joint effort also provided the companies a chance to work together for a common goal and allowed them to network with each other to develop and share ideas.

For more information, please contact Chief Robert Symons, Chairperson, Harrisonburg/Rockingham County Local Emergency Planning Committee, at (540) 564-3175, or e-mail at raschief@shentel.net. ♦

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This newsletter is a vehicle to help LEPCs exchange information and keep abreast of state and federal initiatives.

Tell us what you are doing. We will publish stories, initiatives, projects, studies, or issues that will be of interest to LEPCs and the Virginia hazardous materials response community.

Please submit your comments or recommendations to George Roarty by:
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